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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 ADDIS ABABA 000068

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF AND AF/E
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SUBJECT: SOMALILAND PRESIDENT HIGHLIGHTS COUNTER-TERRORISM
COOPERATION

REF: ADDIS ABABA 60

Classified By: POLOFF ERIC WONG. REASONS: 1.4 (B), (C), (D).

¶1. (S) SUMMARY. In a January 9 meeting with Ambassador, Somaliland President Dahir Rayale Kahin appealed for international recognition and support, highlighting Somaliland's political progress and its commitment to democracy and regional stability. Kahin, accompanied by Finance Minister Hussein Ali Dualeh, asserted that recognition of Somaliland would serve as a bulwark against the emergence of expansionist Somali groups (like the CIC) seeking to destabilize the Horn of Africa through the pursuit of a "greater Somalia." Kahin asked that the USG support efforts to seek recognition by African states, and noted that Somaliland was actively lobbying east and west African leaders. Kahin and Dualeh expressed concern that TFG President Yusuf was failing to accommodate Hawiye, and that disarmament in Somalia would not be possible unless all clans were disarmed simultaneously and under international supervision. Kahin and Dualeh warned that civil war would ensue, if union with Somalia were imposed on Somaliland. Citing the importance of bilateral relations with the United States, President Kahin pledged to comply by "early February" with a USG request to release a detained Somalilander, and expressed interest in visiting Washington in March or April. Kahin attributed tensions between Somaliland and Djibouti to President Guelleh's concerns about commercial competition between Djibouti and Berbera ports. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) Ambassador and deputy pol-econ counselor met January 9 with Somaliland President Dahir Rayale Kahin and Finance Minister Amb. Hussein Ali Dualeh. Kahin said Somaliland was "now in limbo" but deserved support from the international community, due to its establishment of rule of law, good governance and democracy, and commitment to counter-terrorism. Those who failed to assist Somaliland now, may regret the decision in the future, he warned. Somaliland was "viable": its population of 3-4 million was six times that of Djibouti. Reviewing Somaliland's political history since independence in 1960, Kahin said Somaliland had voluntarily initiated a union with southern Somalia in 1960, and then chose to "withdraw from that failed union" in 1991, a decision reaffirmed by the 1997 constitutional referendum monitored by U.S. observers. Somaliland had established rule of law and good governance: promoting reconciliation among warring clans via the 1993 Borama conference, demobilizing

50,000 militia, establishing a bicameral parliament, and holding national elections in 2003. Kahin said his assumption of the presidency upon the death of Mohamed Ibrahim Egal in 2002 had been a constitutional transition nearly unparalleled in Africa. As a former British protectorate, Somaliland's borders (unlike southern Somalia's) were recognized by several international treaties.

Somaliland controlled its borders and prevented piracy in the Gulf of Aden, but suffered with Ethiopia as the "first victims" of instability in southern Somalia, he added.

¶3. (U) Recognizing that nations were built on principles and beliefs, not just ethnicity, Somalilanders had sought to break the "cycle of conflict" associated with the quest for "a greater Somalia," Kahin said. Indeed, Somaliland, rather than southern Somalia, had a greater historical affinity with Ethiopia's Somali region, but had forsaken any such designs in order to promote regional stability, Kahin said. Minister Dualeh added that by dispelling the persistent "dream of greater Somalia" espoused by the Council of Islamic Courts (CIC) and other potential extremist groups, recognition of Somaliland would promote the security of Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia.

¶4. (C) Seeking Somaliland's recognition by the African Union, Kahin said he had met with east African leaders (Ethiopia, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, and Zambia); Somaliland Foreign Minister Abdillahi Duale (reftel) was traveling to Ghana and Togo in order to lobby west Africans. Kahin said UK Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Lord

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Triesman had agreed to push African states to recognize Somaliland, and urged that the USG do the same.

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CONCERN ABOUT CIC THREAT BUT DISDAIN FOR TFG

¶5. (C) As the situation in southern Somalia jeopardized Somaliland's peace and stability, Somaliland was unrivaled in its ability and motivation to monitor developments in Mogadishu, Kahin said, where several terrorists detained in Somaliland had organized. He noted that the CIC had publicly targeted both himself and Finance Minister Dualeh for assassination, as well as Transitional Federal Government of Somalia (TFG) officials. While Somaliland had united warring factions to rise out of anarchy, TFG President Yusuf was incapable of reconciliation, Kahin said. The principal clash in southern Somalia was between the Darod and Hawiye clans, and others were ignored. Instead of appointing a Hawiye as military chief, Yusuf had appointed police, military, and intelligence chiefs solely from his Darod clan, prompting disarmament to fail. Minister Dualeh observed that disarmament would succeed only if all clans were disarmed simultaneously, under international supervision; the UN Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) had failed in 1993 because the Hawiye had felt they were being disarmed first. Hawiye and Darod comprised 38 per cent and 18 per cent of the population respectively in southern Somalia, Dualeh added. Siad Barre, a Darod, had needed to break the Hawiye's stranglehold on Mogadishu; Yusuf's failure to compromise with other clans would render him "only a guest of the Hawiye," Dualeh said.

¶6. (C) Asked about Somaliland's relationship with the TFG, Kahin responded that no agreement with Yusuf was possible so long as Yusuf continued to lay claim to Somaliland. Noting that 50,000 had died fighting for independence, Kahin asserted that the only solution was co-existence: "Somalia must be accepted as two entities, side-by-side; Somalia and Somaliland." The TFG was "an insult" to the Somali people, Kahin said, having failed to achieve anything, in contrast to authorities in Somaliland. It was an injustice that

Somaliland remained a victim of "a failed state," Kahin said.

Ambassador Yamamoto observed that dialogue between the two needed to precede any movement toward recognition. Minister Dualeh recalled that Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles had said he had acceded to Eritrean independence in order to avoid another 30 years of war; civil war among Somalis would result if Somaliland were "forced into a union."

COMMITTED TO COUNTER-TERRORISM COOPERATION

¶7. (S/NF) Pres. Kahin underscored Somaliland's constitutional commitment to combat terrorism, its security cooperation with Yemen, and its ongoing trials of terrorists. The most capable members of Somali intelligence had been Somalilanders, he said, trained by the United States, Russia, and Egypt. Somaliland was a "Muslim state that is willing to fight fanatics," he added, citing examples of bilateral cooperation with U.S. authorities. Kahin pledged to comply by "early February" with a USG request to release a detained Somalilander, as he did not wish the matter to be "an obstacle in our relationship." Underscoring its sensitivity and likely parliamentary concerns about its constitutionality, Kahin said knowledge of the matter was limited to himself, Finance Minister Dualeh, Foreign Minister Duale, and Somaliland's intelligence chief. Noting his own previous experience as a colonel in Somali intelligence, Kahin asserted that the detainee was a terrorist who had sought to overthrow the democratic order, by plotting to kill Kahin and other Somaliland officials, and to assist the CIC. Nevertheless, Kahin said, the detainee would be released, perhaps via Addis Ababa, so long as he never returned to Somaliland. Documents detailing the detainee's associations would not appear in court, Kahin added. However, in return, Somaliland sought aid from the USG: the United States supported democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan; why not Somaliland, Kahin asked.

¶8. (C) Amb. Yamamoto expressed appreciation for Somaliland's cooperation, and observed that the USG had been working on

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how to support Somaliland since President Egal's 1999 visit to the United States. Much of the USD 2-5 million in annual USG aid to Somalia went to Somaliland, including support for former Foreign Minister Edna Adan Ismail's hospital for women, he added. Pres. Kahin said he would work with the USG on a visit to the United States. He added he would plan to do so in March or April, and would contact Amb. Yamamoto regarding the modalities. Amb. Yamamoto expressed support for Somaliland's representative in Washington, highlighting that while a visit would be symbolic, substantive follow-up discussions would be key.

¶9. (C) Pres. Kahin attributed tensions between Somaliland and Djibouti to President Guelleh's concerns about commercial competition between Djibouti and Berbera ports, noting that he and Guelleh were family members, and that Djibouti and Somaliland were comprised of the same clans. In response to Kahin's request for assistance in improving port infrastructure to handle nearly 2 million livestock exported annually, Amb. Yamamoto noted that the USG could examine addressing phytosanitary standards and improving facilities.

¶10. (SBU) BIO-NOTE: Finance Minister Hussein Ali Dualeh was born in Hargeisa. Dualeh said that following military training at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, he returned to Somalia in 1960 and was arrested (and acquitted) with TFG President Abdullahi Yusuf for participating in an abortive 1961 coup against Somaliland's union with Somalia. He later served as Yusuf's deputy when Yusuf was deputy military commander near Dolo. Dualeh served as President Said Barre's ambassador in Uganda and Kenya in the 1970s.

¶11. (C) COMMENT: President Kahin and Finance Minister Dualeh

underscored Somaliland's desire to strengthen strategic ties with the United States, consistent with previous statements by Foreign Minister Abdillahi Duale (reftel). A Washington visit by President Kahin provides an important opportunity to consolidate relations with a pro-Western regime in the Horn of Africa that not only seeks greater international engagement, but also views itself as committed to democracy, counter-terrorism, and combating radical Salafism. END

COMMENT.
YAMAMOTO